

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of

Christ-Church, LONDON,

On Thursday MAY the 1st, 1755:

BEING THE TIME

Of the YEARLY MEETING of
the CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of *London*
and *Westminster*.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

THOMAS Lord Bishop of **NORWICH.**

Published at the Request of the Gentlemen concerned
in the said CHARITY.

To which is annexed,

An ACCOUNT of

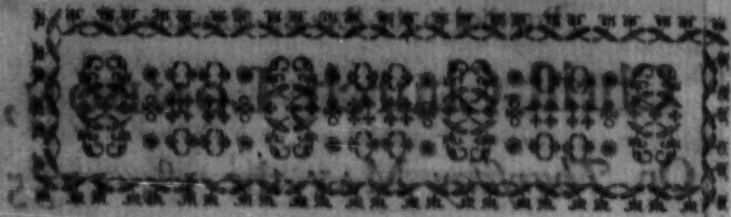
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MDCCLVI.

S E R M O N



BEING THE TIME

Of the YEARLY MEETING of
 the ST. MATTHEW XVIII. 10. CHURCH
 Schools in and about the City of London
 Take heed, that ye despise not one of these little
 ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven
 their angels do always behold the face of
 my Father which is in heaven.
 For the Son of man is come to save that which
 was lost.

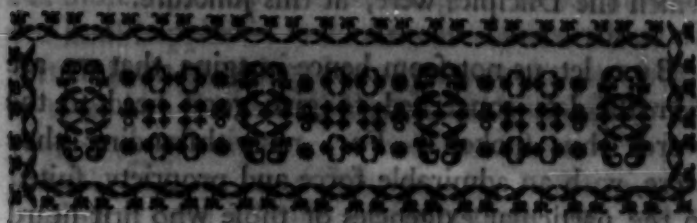
in the said CHURCH.

To which is added,

THIS passage stands in the midst of a
 discourse, which is the subject of the
 text, who were then assembled about
 him, apart from the multitude. And
 the Gerson, which he here gives them with to
 solemnise their earnestness, was not only adapted to
 the occasion, in the text, and in the text.

M. DCC. LVI.

the occasion upon which it was introduced; but it
has also a special reference to the state of mind in
which the Disciples were, at this juncture, when



them from our Saviour's own mouth; they convey
and were designed to convey, a general instruction
St MATTHEW XVIII. 10, 11.

*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little
ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven
their angels do always behold the face of
my father which is in heaven.*

*For the Son of man is come to save that which
was lost.*

His passage stands in the midst of a
Discourse personally and peculiarly di-
rected by our Saviour to his own disci-
ples, who were then assembled about
him, apart from the multitude. And
the Caution which he here gives them with so
solemn an earnestness, was not only adapted to
the

[illegible]

have the same sort of effect upon us, and often lead us to overlook those, whose necessities call for our compassion and relief, or whose helpless innocence it is our duty to protect, and our right to imitate. It is needless to prove that such a temper as this, is directly opposite to that meek benevolent frame of mind which is recommended and inculcated in almost every page of the gospel; and he must be an utter stranger to himself, and never have called his own ways to remembrance, who wants to be told, that, in this respect, amidst the temptations that surround, and the sins that do so easily beset us, we all offend; and are more or less liable to be misled by this selfish aspiring disposition.

But were the chosen followers and constant hearers of the meek and lowly Jesus, in any period of their Discipleship, subject to be elated by ambition, or contracted by selfishness? They certainly were; and I shall in its proper place shew you what it was, that thus over-ruled, for a time, the natural goodness of their honest benevolent hearts.

But to bring the Cautious home to the heart of the matter, as they being men of like passions with us, we might not wonder that they were not exempt from failings; and we should reflect, that we cannot shelter ourselves under their example, if we do not copy them in their subsequent behavior. For they were only for a season, as bearing the testimony of the people of God, and the same evidence, which

which opened their understanding, immediately presented a right spirit within them. Now the whole of that evidence, which wrought in them a thorough reformation of mind and temper, hath been transmitted down to us in the Gospel; and we should resent it as an injurious reproach, to have it said or supposed, that we were unacquainted with the moral spiritual nature of that dispensation of grace and wisdom which came through Jesus Christ. And yet do we not, in too many instances, act as if we had nothing to hope or to fear, beyond the present life, from Him in whom we profess to believe, as the Author of eternal salvation!

You see, from this general view of the caution in the text, how strongly we are enjoined by it to beware of that temper which is the bane of all Charity! as it confines our thoughts and our affections to the things of this world, and to ourselves; and, in the same proportion, lessens our concern for the present happiness, or future welfare of others.

BUT to bring the Caution home to the design of this meeting, and to apply it with more force to the case of these Poor Children, it will be necessary to trace up the original property of this monition, as personally directed to the disciples, and exactly adapted to the state of mind in which they then were. This will oblige us to look into the seemingly dark, exceptionable part of their character; but it will also

...with which they celebrate the
...the truth was established... 100%

There is an enemy which had nothing to conceal or to fear. It could only bring down its assurance that their cause, being the cause of God, could not fail by their personal sins or misadventures: and it was their vanity, as historians and the Cause of the good history, upon a rock that cannot be shaken.

[The page contains several lines of extremely faint, illegible text.]

...this arduous task: especially as, when we find them preaching every where the Kingdom of God, and the glory of his name, and the salvation of his people, it is not in the least diminished state of ... they did not so much as know ... Indeed they were ... concerning it, that they thought it ... temporal kingdom, to be erected by ... they were by his own free choice, in preference to the rest of their Countrymen. Was it not natural for men, so circumstanced, to expect, that they, who had followed him in adversity, should be his principal favourites, and be advanced to the first posts of honour and dignity, when he himself was clothed with royalty and dominion? They did expect it with impatience: and they must have been more than men, if they had not been, as they were, elated with ambition.

... you have an instance of worldly ambition, ... in every ... it is ... to ... in order to gratify it.

30th: B it.

in One such step would have destroyed all their hopes, and their pretensions to superiority. For under the reign of the Messiah, the distinguishing glory of which the Scriptures had declared it to be, that in his Days the Righteous should flourish; no one could hope to rise to greatness, who did not excel in goodness. And yet what were the effects, even of such an ambition as this, upon the honest upright minds of the disciples? It had very malignant ones. For, in the first place, it not only destroyed their relish for those heavenly truths, which Jesus was perpetually communicating and inculcating to them, with all the amiable condescension of divine wisdom; but it absolutely disqualified the disciples from comprehending those truths: for every saying of his, which they could not reconcile with prejudices riveted upon them by education, and justified, as they thought, by the sanction of a divine authority, was unintelligible to them. And the gospel expressly takes notice, that they understood none of these sayings, for they were hid from their eyes.

FURTHER, it not only darkened their understandings, but soured their temper; and made them behave, in some instances, in a manner not easy to be accounted for. If we do not attend to the proper cause of such behaviour. Being misled by a fundamental error, they resented almost every thing to a false standard; and whatever did not agree with that standard, was, in their judgment, wrong and blameable.

able. Hence it was, that they rebuked those who brought little children to our Saviour, that he might lay his hands upon them and bless them. For notwithstanding those who brought the Children, testified by this, their reverence for Jesus as a holy and good man, whose Prayer or Blessing would avail much, the disciples thought they put him upon an employment beneath the majesty of his character, who was upon the point of ascending the throne of David, and restoring the kingdom to Israel; by an exertion of the same power, with which he had restored eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and life to the dead.

But this ambition was productive of Consequences still less justifiable. By breeding competitions, and exciting mutual jealousies amongst them, it disturbed that reciprocal Harmony of affection which ought to have subsisted between those, whom our Saviour had so often told, that their *loving Love one towards another*, was the mark by which *all men should know them to be his disciples*.

ONLY one of them could be the greatest, and each desiring to be so, they were constantly disputing among themselves to whose lot this envied mark of preeminence would fall. Upon this single point all their disputes turned, and, as they could not determine what depended upon the voluntary determination of their Master, and grew more impatient, as

they supposed the day of their greatness was now
 nigh, even at the doors; they ventured to put the
 question to Jesus himself. But, being afraid to put
 it in terms that carried a direct reference to them-
 selves, they asked him only in general, *Who is the
 greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Our Saviour, in-
 stead of returning an answer to solve the doubt, gave
 them one which admonished them of the mistake in
 which both the question and the doubt were founded.
 He called a little child into him and set him in the
 midst of them, and said, *Verily I say unto you, except
 ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not
 enter into the kingdom of heaven: whosoever therefore shall
 humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest
 in the kingdom of heaven.*

Here the command to *become as little children*, i. e.
 to endeavour to resemble children in the purity of
 their heart, the humility of their temper, and the in-
 offensiveness of their behaviour, is laid on all Chris-
 tians in general, and such as conform to this com-
 mand, are immediately after, in allusion to this cir-
 cumstance, marked out and recommended by our
 Saviour under the endearing expressive appellation of
little ones. And the whole passage, as to the true
 scope and meaning of it, appears to us, who now
 hear or read it, to be no less plain and familiar than
 it is strong and permanent. For, by the just and strik-
 ing image of a Child, it exhibits to our very senses,
 the great end and design of Christianity, as uni-
 formly tending to cultivate in us that meek spirit of
 inno-

innocence and simplicity, which is the peculiar ornament of childhood; and which will most effectually recommend us to the favour of God and man, through every subsequent period of life.

But we are not to infer, that because the sense and meaning of this answer, which our Saviour returned to the question put to him by his disciples, is plain and familiar to us, that it was so to them. It might mortify their pride; but it could not, at that time, either clear up the doubt, or remove the prejudices under which they laboured; and under which they were providentially permitted to labour, till they were convinced by that evidence, upon which the faith of the world is founded, and against which the *Gates of Hell will never prevail*. All they probably understood by it, was, that they were mistaken as to the kingdom they had so long expected, which now seemed to vanish and be done away with all their expectations of being great in it when it came. For could they then suspect, that the *kingdom of God*, into which no one could enter, who did not become as a little Child, was actually in them? That this kingdom had its seat in the heart, of which it was to take possession by a silent and unobserved progress; and was truly established there, when the passions and appetites were become subject to the dictates of reason, and every thought, that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, was brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?

WHAT

V. 1. immediately follows in this Discourse of
 Jesus, that *whoever received one of these little ones in his
 name, received him; and whoever offended one of them,*
would be in a more terrible condition than if a mill-
stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drown-
ed in the depth of the sea. — His denouncing *ye* upon
 the world because of offences, which he foresaw would
 certainly come by means of his bitter sufferings and
 ignominious death. — His declaring that the pre-
 judices from whence those offences were to arise, would
 get such fast hold of the mind, as to seem almost as
 much a part of it as any limb is a part of the body
 to which it belongs. — His illustrating the pain which
 would attend the violent separation of these darling
 errors from the mind, by the anguish that is felt
 upon cutting off a hand or a foot, or plucking out an eye,
 and casting it from us. — His further shewing the ne-
 cessity of our undergoing this moral amputation of
 prejudices, thus intimately incorporated with our-
 selves, and, at the same time, inconsistent with the
 pursuit or attainment of our final happiness, by tell-
 ing them, that *it is better to enter into life halt or main-*
ted, than having two hands, and two feet, to be cast into
everlasting fire. — I say, all these alarming figurative
 representations of the truth, which the disciples were
 not then qualified to have nakedly laid before them,
 must have heightened their astonishment, and excit-
 ed in them an inward contempt of the child that
 was standing in the midst of them. For we cannot
 doubt

doubt but they were moved with disdain, that a mere child, not able yet to discern between good and evil, and wanting the guidance and direction of others, should be proposed to them as their guide or pattern.

Our Saviour, discerning what they thought, and signified perhaps by their looks or gestures, immediately turned his discourse to the Point, upon which, in their present temper of mind, they judged thus wrongly: and, concerning which, it was so seasonable and necessary to rectify their judgment; and still retaining the terms *little ones*, but applying them, in their proper literal sense, to children, went on speaking to them in the words of the text, *Take heed, that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

The original meaning then, and primary purport of our Saviour in this monition, was to inculcate a religious regard for Children: And the motives, by which he presses this regard upon us, are not only of themselves very awful and affecting, but they have moreover, in his application of them, a force and significance which no other monitor could impart to them. He came down from heaven, knew the Father whom he was known by him, and could therefore declare the secret invisible agency of divine providence.

providence, with the same certainty with which an historian relates a matter of fact to which he had been an eye-witness. And by adding, as he does in the following verse, that he, the Son of man, came to save that which was lost, he in effect tells us, that, in guarding children from the spiritual dangers which lie in wait for them our innocent helpless fellow-creatures, we both copy the example of those ministering spirits, who are employed by God to minister unto them: and that we at the same time promote the end for which God sent his only begotten Son into the world, to prevent, so far as infinite wisdom and goodness could interpose to prevent, *one of these little ones from perishing*.

You see from this natural construction of the text, that the Redeemer of mankind considered children in that light in which Christianity requires us to consider them, as frail immortal Beings, born into the world by God's appointment, in order to be placed in a hazardous state of trial; and as yet not only ignorant that their final happiness or misery will soon depend upon their own behaviour, but withal utterly unable, without the foresight and help of others, to make any provision for themselves beforehand, that they may be prepared to meet the day of trial, which is coming so fast upon them.

Upon this account it is that the Father of mercies watches over Children with a peculiar care. And

for

For the sake of kindness and compassion, shall earthly parents are laid under a sacred obligation not to be negligent in providing for the future eternal welfare of their own children, by initiating into their tender teachable minds, just notions of religion, and plain practical rules of Virtue, to govern and regulate their conduct through life. That being thus directed up from their childhood in the way in which they must go, they may not depart from it; when they are no longer under tutors, and have the most important of all trusts committed to them, the care of themselves and their own immortal happiness.

Upon this immovable foundation the duty of teaching children betimes, what is necessary to salvation, stands; and it is here recommended to us by the express authority of Christ himself, with the whole weight of the christian revelation. Indeed it is a duty of universal extent, and productive of the greatest good; the faithful discharge of it is the noblest office, and truest exertion of parental love and tenderness; and, whenever the parents themselves, through indigence, or any other incapacity, are disabled from discharging it, all Christians, who are of Christ, are, or ought to be, reminded by it, that they will not lack any manner of grace, which is necessary with which they are called; if they do not, as they have opportunity, take pity upon such children, who have none, and assist them with themselves, and yet perhaps, also, assist a dying creature, who is in the last stage of his life.

haps never once heard who their Lord is, in whose name they were baptized.

The distinction of high and low, rich and poor, create no difference in this case. For all children, in the estimation of their heavenly Father, and with regard to a future world, whatever be their rank or condition in this, are circumstanced alike, and stand upon a footing of equality. The child of the beggar, covered with rags, and pinched with hunger, hath as good a title to the inheritance which *Yahshua* has away, eternal in the heavens, as if he had been born of parents clothed in purple and faring sumptuously every day. And it is not more absurd, or more inhuman, to assert, that such a poor child ought not to enjoy the same common light of the sun, or breath the same common air, with the children of the rich and the great, than it is repugnant to reason and humanity, to exclude him from the knowledge and light of the gospel, and condemn him to *walk on in darkness, and the shadow of death*, upon account of his poverty and meanness.

WHAT reason and humanity dictate to every serious good-natured mind, concerning the melancholy situation of such children, and the relief due to them, the spirit of Christianity inspired good men to put in practice, and to project a regular plan of charity for preventing those pitiable multitudes from being starved for lack of knowledge, no less than for want of bread.

UPON

UPON this scheme of Christian compassion and benevolence, these schools were instituted: and, by this circumstance, they are properly distinguished from those other institutions of charity, whose immediate object it is to feed the hungry, cloath the naked, or heal the sick. For in these schools, the bodily wants also are supplied, the good of the soul is regarded in the first place. And it was their original design, and hath been their constant effect, to spread and preserve, in no small degree, a practical sense of religion and virtue amongst the lowest of the people.

I SHALL now, as briefly as I can, state to You the distinguishing excellence of this branch of charity: and, that you may be more clearly convinced of that excellence, I shall consider how beneficial it is both to the children, and to the community. For by this method of recommending these schools, it will appear, that they are of service to the public, in a civil view; because they are so eminently serviceable to the children, in a religious one. And this alone will be sufficient to obviate most of the objections that have been made to them, without entering into a minute examination of the objections themselves.

Now the truest friends and most zealous encouragers of these Schools, who have *understanding* as well as zeal in the *cause of goodness*, will readily admit, that

any scheme of charity for educating the children of the poor, however it may proceed from a real Christian spirit of compassion towards the children, and a laudable intention of promoting the interest of religion, stands liable to an unanswerable objection, if, in the original plan, or subsequent management of such scheme, it directly and manifestly tends to disturb and unsettle that regular subordination of persons one to another, according to their respective ranks and conditions, in which society is founded, and without which, no Government can be carried on, or subsist. For the distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, which form this subordination, arising in the natural course of things, are in reality the ordinance of that superintending care, by which the natural course of things is directed, and ought therefore, in strict propriety, to be referred to the special appointment of God himself, who is, in this view, set forth to us in sacred writ, as *the maker both of the poor and of the rich.*

As a consequence of this providential disposition, by which men thus differ from one another in their external circumstances, persons are provided, through all the several gradations of society, for discharging all the manifold offices which are respectively requisite for the well-being and support of society. And the punctual discharge of the lowest of these offices, is as needful as that of the highest and most important. There must be drudges to labour (*bevers of wood,*

dead, and the rest of earth, the Scripture styles them) as well as counsellors to direct, and rulers to preside, and the former, no less than the latter, maintain the state of the world; nor could a city be inhabited. As in the human body the members, upon account of their fitness and necessity for supporting the whole structure, have, in the eye of reason, more abundant compass than even those ornamental trainings of divine art, which serve chiefly to add grace and beauty to this vital complicated system.

And without which, no Government can be, nor law, nor order, nor distinction of high and low. To which of these classes we belong, especially as to the more inferior ones, our birth determines. For that declares our situation in the community, and of course points out in general, how we ought to be educated, that we may be able to fulfil the duties of the vocation, whatever it be, to which we are thus called by God.

Now this general rule is subject to the least variation, and allows of the least latitude in the case of the children of the poor. These are *but* always with us, and they are so numerous, that however inconsiderable a poor child, singly taken, may appear, this collective body of these children makes up the bulk of the common people. And as they grow up, and add a right or wrong part in society, they increase or lessen the internal strength of Government, and to reward (where it is worth the labour) must be directed.

greatly contribute to the disturbance or preservation of public peace and order.

Thus they have not scrupled to charge upon all men are born to labour in some shape or other as the *sparks from a fire*. But these poor children are born to be daily labourers, and for the most part to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. It is evident then, that if such children are by charity brought up in a manner that is only proper to qualify them for a rank to which they ought not to aspire, and that consequently tends to disqualify them for the occupations of that mean, labouring station, in which they will most probably be obliged to continue; such a charity would in reality be injurious both to the children and to the community. I know the enlightened Protestant country would be much debased the use of the Bible as they could be.

I HAVE purposely stated in its full strength the only consideration of weight from whence any material objection can be urged against these schools. And I have done so because the objectors to them; have laboured to colour over the real ground of their dislike to these Christian institutions, by a pretended zeal and solicitude for the civil interest and welfare of the state. Indeed they have not omitted any artifice of misrepresentation, from this plausible topic, to insinuate prejudices against them; and induce the real friends of religion, and of these schools, to become cold or indifferent about the success and enlargement of this excellent, unexceptionable and of charity.

greatly contribute to the disturbance or preservation of public peace and order.

THUS they have not scrupled to charge upon these useful seminaries of virtue and industry, the scarcity of hands proper for carrying on agriculture, and the meaner trades and occupations; when that scarcity is truly to be ascribed to the excessive luxury of the age, and to the number of idle attendants that swarm in the houses, and crowd the equipages of the Great. They have even ventured to make it an exception against these schools, because in them the poor children are taught to read and write, and keep a just and honest account of their own little affairs. Whereas, without the first of these low and necessary accomplishments, vast multitudes, in this free enlightened protestant country, would be as much debarred the use of the Bible, as they could be, under the most bigotted popish government: and, in fact, stand as much exposed to the danger of being seduced to popery by those, whose constant business it is to seek out and to pervert ignorant Protestants.

SUCH cavils as these deserve no notice: for they prove nothing but the narrow irreligious spirit and temper of those who start them. Especially when we remember, that he, who was most eager in sharpening with all the stock of wit and ridicule, of which he was master, these and other frivolous objections against Charity Schools, was abandoned enough to avow and maintain in form, this absurd, detestable tenet, "That private Vices are public Benefits."

FUR-

FURTHER, to obviate and remove any just ground of dissatisfaction which may be entertained by the most cordial well-wishers to these schools, it may be proper to observe, that the Trustees and Managers of them have, by successive attempts, from time to time, endeavoured to carry on this good work to all the perfection of which it is capable. For they have gradually introduced and connected *school* with *instruction*, so far as the circumstances of the charity, and the present state of a scanty, precarious fund, will admit of this desirable improvement. And when the children are of age, they act for them, as their parents, if they were not indigent, would or ought to act, by putting them out to an employment, best suited to their rank, and by which they are most likely to get a decent, comfortable maintenance. And certainly, thus to consult the interest of a poor child, is the most effectual method of consulting and advancing the interest of the public.

BUT after all, the interest of the public is best consulted and advanced by the original plan and tendency of the Schools themselves, in a way far more extensive and sure, than any care or prudence of the best managers could have made them answer this purpose, if the tendency of them had not been secured by the plan upon which they were first formed. They were founded upon Christian principles, that cannot fail, and they can be unanswerably vindicated

vindicated against all gainsayers, by christian arguments only. *THESE ARE THE ONLY ARGUMENTS WHICH MAY BE ADMITTED BY THE*
 Man; who judge of the gospel solely by what they
 have learnt concerning it, from the concepts or pre-
 suppositions of the gospel, and who have perhaps lived
 so, as with just reason to dread a revelation of God
 from heaven, against all unrighteousness and ungodly living;
 such men, I say, may be given up to the strong delusion
 of believing in lies, because they wish it to be true, and
 in consequence of this judicial blindness, under
 the assumed character of deep statesmen, acute rea-
 soners, and unbiassed Freethinkers, or any other
 respectable denomination, which it is their vanity to
 arrogate, and their reproach to counteract; they may
 labour to persuade themselves and others, that it is
 not only unnecessary, but impolitic to instruct the
 Common People in Christianity; upon a persuasion,
 that they will be more easily managed, by being kept
 in a state of ignorance. It is also to be presumed,
 that possibly men of this turn may be the more eager
 in opposing these Schools, for that which is their
 strongest recommendation, because they tend not
 only to create in the Common People a reverence
 for Christianity; but dispose them also to listen to the
 Teachers of it highly in Esteem for their own sakes.
 But let us not be deceived by those who thus deceive
 themselves; and, by a reproachful mind, are disqualified to
 themselves

D

from

from coming to the Knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. It is indeed a motive, which God is pleased to promise, or a power to bestow. For as on the one hand, the works of God can never be at variance with one another. And therefore, what his revealed will enjoins, must perfectly correspond with that constitution of things which He himself appointed; and to the providence, by which he governs and directs every thing to the great end, for which he made and save it to be good. For his being the Father and Pledge that all scripture to be the Father and Pledge that all.

Now Christianity is a scheme, which hath the happiness of the moral world for its object. And it is, in every part of it, so ordered by divine wisdom, as to promote the happiness of mankind, both as Individuals, and Members of society. Being intended for the benefit of all, it is fitted to the wants of all, and made level to the capacities of all, *from the least even to the greatest.* For the social duties prescribed by pure, undefiled Religion, are, upon the whole, no other than that course of behaviour, which the circumstances of every man's particular rank and station require, and make it fit and reasonable for him to observe, both for his own sake, and the sake of the Community. And the motive, by which those social duties are enforced, is so powerful; that, if rightly attended to, it is sufficient to keep us steady in the discharge of these duties, with whatever difficulties it may, in many instances, be attended.

and every other poor labourer may with cheerfulness

It

It is indeed a motive, which God always hath a right to promise, or a power to bestow. For eternal Life, which is promised in the gospel to all who obey the gospel, is in every sense the *free Gift of God*. And, that we shall be partakers of this gift, if we are not wanting to ourselves, we have the fullest assurance given us, by a plain matter of fact, which any one may understand, the Resurrection of Christ. For his being thus raised by God, is declared in the scripture, to be the Earnest and Pledge, that all mankind will, in like manner, be raised from the Dead, by the same God and Father of all.

Such a plan of happiness and wisdom as this, is not that wisdom of the learned, which cometh from Opportunity of leisure, and is the proper accomplishment of those who direct and regulate the affairs of the world, sit on the seat of Judgment, and are sought for, as Counsellors, to appear before Princes. It is indeed a heavenly plan of knowledge, fit and necessary for the greatest and wisest of the children of men: but it is also no less fit and necessary for the lowest: for him that holdeth the plough, that driveth the oxen, and is occupied in their labours, for him that sitteth by the anvil, considering the iron-work, whilst the vapour of the fire wasteth his flesh, and he fighteth with the heat of the furnace, for him that fashioneth the clay with his arm, and boweth down his strength to his feet. That each of these, and every other poor labourer, may with

charitableness, persevere in his labours, and place his
 life more earnestly in the work of his office, as the
 task which God hath allotted him; and to the con-
 scientious, diligent performance of which God him-
 self hath, in the Gospel, annexed and promised an
 eternal reward.

WITH this View probably, amongst others, our
 Saviour, in answer to the message of his Fore-runner,
Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?
 particularly mentioned this circumstance, *To the poor*
is the gospel preached; intimating, that those who laboured,
 and were heavy laden, would be refreshed by his gospel;
 and find in it, what he affectionately invited them to
 come unto him for, *rest to their souls*. As they would be
 abundantly strengthened by the precious promises of the
 gospel to sustain the pressure of poverty; and to
 go through the toils of a laborious life, without re-
 pinning or murmuring at God, who in his wisdom
 thought fit to put them to so difficult a trial.

WITH the same charitable intention, the gospel
 is, in these schools, taught the children of the poor:
 and it is taught in a practical, summary manner, so
 far only as is requisite to furnish them with rules
 and motives of right conduct. That being, from
 their childhood, every day admonished "to do their
 duty in that state of life, in which it hath pleased
 God to place them," they may when they are sent
 abroad into the world, be guarded both against the
 temptations, by which those of their own rank, not
 having

having the same good principles with themselves, may endeavour to seduce them; and be also armed against the more dangerous influence of bad examples in their superiors. So that, unless the religious instruction of these schools, produces an effect directly contrary to that which it is fitted and calculated to produce, the poor children educated in them, will, in the future course of their life, be sober, peaceful, and industrious in their respective callings; and as such, they cannot but be useful members of the community. The civil advantages then, which the State derives from these Charity Schools, directly and immediately result, from the inestimable advantage of that christian knowledge, by which the poor children themselves, are both taught and incited to be good men, and good subjects, *in an godliness and honesty.*

This is a consideration of great moment, at a time when the whole is more immediately endangered by the general dissoluteness of the people, than by any other cause.

But the merit of these Schools, with regard to the Public, will not be fully understood or acknowledged, if we do not take notice of the mischiefs they prevent, as well as of the good they do. Of this part of their utility, which we are too apt to overlook, because mischiefs prevented are not felt, you will have a most shocking conviction; if in passing through

through the streets of this overgrown city, you attend to what you can scarce avoid seeing, the poor children of both sexes, who being abandoned by their parents, never were so fortunate as to gain an admission into these nurseries of sobriety, by the providential interposition of any kind compassionate benefactor.

THESE wretched orphans exhibit to us a melancholy proof of that genuine account, which Christianity gives us of the corrupt bent of human nature; and of the turn it will take, when no culture, or instruction of any kind is applied to excite, or guide, the reasoning powers and faculties. For these deplorable objects, growing up in a wild undisciplined state of mind, arrive at full maturity in wickedness, almost before they have reached the period of youth: and, even in the bloom of life, are worn out, and rendered decrepit by the commission of vices, to which their own appetites or necessities impel them; or the veteran corruptors, under whom they chance to be lifted, lead or drive them.

How many children these Schools deliver from so deplorable a state of misery and vice, how many servicable members they are constantly bringing up for the use and benefit of the community; let the thousands of them now present declare: — and let any adversary of religious instruction, any advocate for keeping the bulk of a free people in a state of ignorance,

ignorance, seriously consider, whether he can reconcile this infidel paradox, with the real welfare and prosperity of this land of freedom and protestantism.

For, can he expect that the poor will learn nothing that is bad, because they are taught nothing that is good? Will their appetites and passions be more easily restrained by removing the only checks that can most effectually restrain them? Will they be rendered more submissive to their Governors, by withdrawing from them every moral motive, every religious ground of submission? Or does he fear lest their obedience to the ordinances of man, should become more precarious, when it is paid not only *for wrath*, but also *for conscience sake*; than when it is extorted by the mere dread of punishment, which will seldom check or controul them in any instance, where the temptation is urgent, and the chance of escaping with impunity, probable? On the contrary, is it not evident from the frailties of our nature, and from constant experience, that ignorance is self-willed and intractable; and that the ordinary effects of Ignorance are sloth, and vice, and necessity?

Now when one and the same person is both ignorant, and vicious, and necessitous, he is hardened against all the Terrors of punishment that religion can threaten, law denounce, or government inflict: and

and find a furious war torn out of his sleep, becomes the dream and part of his life, another war, multiplied in number from this first, but always in proportion as such characters multiply (and they multiply exceedingly when encouraged by the dissoluteness of those who might drive and restrain them) tumult and disorder increase, the reverence for public authority lessens, and by degrees, all authority is set at open defiance. When things are carried to this extent, the best constituted Government is exposed to the mercy of a lawless multitude; and the very basis of it shakes and totters upon the first rude shock of violence from within, or sedition from without, *within*.

This is not matter of speculation only. It is not the product of those fears and apprehensions, which religion justly raises in serious, thoughtful minds, when things seem tending towards this desperate extreme of profligacy. It is an observation founded in the ordinary and stated operation of moral Causes and Effects; and every step in this horrid scale of prevailing wickedness and public ruin, follows as regularly, as any conclusion of right reason is deduced from its proper premises.

Remember this, ye that forget God; and vainly imagine that, by withdrawing your own thoughts from God, and (as much as in you lieth) excluding Him from the thoughts of others, you shall be able with

more, else and less intervention, to conduct your
systems and measures of policy. For the most High
ruler, and necessarily must rule in the kingdoms of men,
from everlasting to everlasting. He can, and often
does, in a moment blast and disconcert these impious
efforts, to take the government of the world, out of
the hand that created it. And let me entreat you
to reflect upon this alarming truth, to which the
history of every age and country bears testimony,
that so far as you succeed, in destroying the sense and
influence of religion in any nation, just so far you
have gone, towards putting down all Rule, and all Author-
ity.

This subject, upon which, I have been enlarging,
hath led me to trace out to you, in their original
source, those opinions and prejudices, which, as they
respectively set our affections upon things above, or things
on earth, gradually create and fix that inward temper,
which properly constitutes each man's real character,
and determines different men, to engage in different
pursuits, and to form opposite judgments of what is
fit or expedient for them to do, in almost every exi-
gence of life, and conduct. For character is, in ef-
fect, nothing more than that inward temper, carried
into action, and exemplified in the general tenor of
our behaviour.

This is, without doubt, a subject of the highest
consequence, and most comprehensive extent: since

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it bears more or less connection, with almost all the several truths, duties, and maxims of morality, religion, and government. So that barely to mention the various reflections, and inferences, that might be drawn from it, would carry me far beyond the limits of a Sermon. I must therefore content myself with sketching out to you, three of the most interesting observations, as they have a closer and more immediate reference to the design, for which we are now assembled: and are more directly subservient to the great end, for which our Society was instituted, *The Promotion of Christian Knowledge.*

FIRST then, as those, who disbelieve, or affect to disbelieve Christianity, generally charge Believers with a narrowness of thought and conduct; and value themselves, upon the largeness and benevolence of their sentiments, and their public-spirited zeal for civil liberty; it may be proper, from what I have already observed, to shew in a few words, *how an evil heart of unbelief* doth naturally contract, and sour the temper; and both perplex, and mislead the understanding.

INDEED, so far as our turn of temper depends upon our opinions; and our judgment is governed and formed, as it commonly is, by the principles upon which we act; irreligion undoubtedly hath a strong tendency, thus to debase and enslave the mind, and render it indifferent to Public Good. I do not pretend

to fix the actual Character of Individuals, as constantly and necessarily fashioned by the principles or opinions, they have really adopted: for men may externally behave well, in spite of the worst principles; as they too often behave ill, in contradiction to the best. But still the proper and natural tendency of irreligion may, upon the whole, be distinctly ascertained: especially as, in most cases, it does, in fact, prevail and operate; though it may, in many instances, be over-ruled and suspended.

Now an irreligious man, as such, can have no hopes, though he seldom can avoid having some fears, beyond the present life: hence he is driven to place his whole felicity, in the good things of this world: and, as the constitutional bias of his disposition impels him to the pursuit, of honour, or wealth, or pleasure, having no restraint to check him in such his pursuit, but what arises from prudential considerations of safety, reputation, or health, he is liable to run, without scruple or controul, into the several excesses of ambition, avarice, or sensuality. In all these favorite objects, he is sure to be thwarted by competitors, as eagerly bent upon them, as himself: and, of course, he is frequently mortified by disappointments. By this means, his attachments to the only gratifications he is capable of relishing or valuing, are more and more contracted within the limits of mere self: and his regard, for the just pretensions of others, decreases in the same proportion, *i. e.* he is

continually growing more selfish, less benevolent and less charitable. The true characteristic dignity of human nature (in which all men are equal, and precisely, what Christianity fills them, and in a particular sense makes them, *all brethren*) lying out of his more interested views, which engross his attention, he is apt to consider the poor helpless man, as an object foreign to his purpose, and therefore unworthy of his concern or notice.

WHAT room is there for the generous, enlarged Idea of Public Good, to enter into a mind thus fondly wrapt up in the contemplation, and singly devoted to the attainment, of its own separate advantages? Indeed, as Public Good chiefly turns upon the maintenance and promotion of true religion and virtue; he is perpetually opposing it by his principles and obstructing it by his example. So that in this respect, an irreligious man injures the public, by the same course of behaviour, by which he acts and judges in a way so inconsistent with his own real happiness.

BUT, as a member of society, he hath a radical flaw in his character, which no accomplishments of art or nature can supply or compensate. Indeed, the greater his abilities are, the less confidence will be reposed in him, from a just suspicion, that he will lay least stress upon the most important article of British policy; if even the welfare of this Country should

should be entrusted to the management of such a director, who, though he may, by surprise, creep into power, yet, by no address, screen himself against the distrust and jealousy of the public.

For, as he professedly careth not for God, but *but* hath God in all his thoughts, and treats all religion, as a mere human invention and contrivance; he must, upon his own scheme, be void of all regard for the religion of his country: nor can he feel any solicitude to support it, any further than he sees his own safety, or greatness, connected with that support. Consequently, his aid is least to be depended upon in the day of general distress and danger, when it is most critically wanted. For, independent of the self-regard just mentioned, he can have no more value for religion, as reformed from the errors and corruptions of Popery, than for those very errors and corruptions: to which the dissolute and the profane are so often known to fly at last, for absolution from the punishment of sin, without any *godly sorrow* for the guilt of it.

But to be thus indifferent, upon so fundamental a point as our religion, which includes and secures whatever is nearest and dearest to us, is in fact to be indifferent, whether this country is a land of Prelates and Protestants, or of Slaves and Bigots. It is to be indifferent, whether we do or do not continue to enjoy the greatest of all temporal blessings, in a

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things equally necessary to maintain both our liberty,
 and our present happiness. Will it not enlarge the
 -cessa laid out to kind feelings of kind feelings and
 of this proper and natural tendency of the religion to
 contract and debilitate the mind, being thus briefly as-
 ertained and illustrated, it will require no tedious
 deduction of particulars to derive from the *spirit*
 which we profess, *working in it ought to work*, by
 love, the genuine opposite fruits of *unmixed illi-*
 gion. For the fruits of a christian spirit, are not,
 like the perverse inferences of an infidel mind, the
 production of delusive hopes, groundless opinions,
 or self-flattering imaginations, suggested to us by our
 own deceitful heart; but they spring from truths
 and principles, which the Author of our being hath
 mercifully vouchsafed to communicate to us, not
 only in order to raise our nature to a more exalted
 state of perfection and glory; but to inspire us with
 just and noble sentiments of its intrinsic worth and
 excellence. For can it enter into the heart of man to
 conceive a more efficacious principle of beneficence, or
 a truth more fitted to give us a right understanding
 of the value and use of every thing here below, than
 a sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality,
 especially when we reflect, that bearing good-will,
 and *as much as in us lieth* doing good to all men, is
 made the condition of our obtaining this end of our
 hope? Will not this glorious prospect, habitually
 present to the mind, strengthen us with might in the
 inner man to subdue those lusts that sink and enslave
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the soul, and inflame us with rage to tear and devour one another? Will it not enlarge and warm the heart, with all the delightful feelings of kind social affections? Will it not continually exhort us, with the irresistible sweetpse of a divine authority, to walk on through the short journey of this uncertain life, in brotherly love and charity, with our fellow-travellers, assisting and encouraging one another by reciprocal acts of kindness, as being all alike earnest to the partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and to be companions in a better world, of the spirits of just men made perfect?

It would be highly uncharitable to doubt, whether a man, proceeding upon such motives and views of immortality towards his heavenly country, will not bear a subordinate cordial love towards that country, in which providence hath appointed him to sojourn, and which, during the course of his pilgrimage here upon earth, dispenses to him the blessings and comforts of society. For, as it is his delight and employment to consult and promote the happiness of every individual within his reach, can he be a cold indifferent promoter of public Good, which at once implies and promotes the happiness of millions? When he, with gratitude and reverence, considers the Son of God himself, as sent by God, to reveal to the world that religion, which he professes: will he not look upon the privilege of professing it, in its native purity, as the most valuable branch of civil liberty, which,

which in return, denies its own stability from the
 very privilege it secures? Will he not thank a
 friend to Liberty, because he is a friend to Protestant-
 ism, not upon mere maxims of State, which may
 change, but upon principles of duty and conscience,
 which are of an unchangeable obligation, and of force
 sufficient to administer to him support and consol-
 ation, under the most severe trials of his virtue and in-
 tegrity? He who have of late years aged with
 age and malice, with a new kind of Enthusiasm and
 zeal, is a just reproach to the multitude, who *give*
little name of Christ, that there are not more found, who
 thus exemplify, and adorn their vocation. But the
 power of religion is not to be measured by the lives
 of those who have only the empty form of it. For,
 if even an Infidel could prevail upon himself to read
 the Gospel, with fairness and impartiality, it would
 be difficult for him to avoid being persuaded that a
 rational sincere belief of the truths there laid down,
 and a conduct uniformly regulated by that belief,
 would naturally form the lovely, beneficent, public-
 spirited Character, of which I have been sketching
 out to you a faint, imperfect description.
 LASTLY, That torrent of licentiousness, which
 threatens at present to overwhelm our Laws, our
 Liberty, and our Constitution itself, admonishes me
 to point out to you, in very few words, the princi-
 pal cause that hath brought on the distress of these
 perilous times, and the only remedy that can effec-
 tually

actually infected, and society, to its and to our
very privilege it secures. Will he not
tend to Liberty, because he is a friend to Protestant-
ism? Now, in this melancholy scene of confusion and
danger, you will find religion actually operating,
in the manner in which I have observed it always
hath a strong tendency to operate, upon society and
government. Indeed, the Champions and Emulraries
of Infidelity, have of late years acted with an eager-
ness, or rather, with a new kind of Enthusiasm and
Bigotry, in propagating their irreligious tenets; and
the corresponding growth of Vice and Immorality, hath
marked out their progress and success. We may
even discern the peculiar operation of each irreligious
tenet, in the nature of the mischief wrought by it.
Thus that superintending wisdom and goodness of
the sovereign Ruler of the world, which supports the
kingdoms of men, and from which we continually
receive life and breath and all things, hath been openly
struck at; and, in consequence of this, the laws of
divine government being lessened, when were dom-
esticated despised dignities evil spoken of, and the au-
thority of lawful governors insulted, to so shocking
a degree as at present? — The sacred ordinances of
religion, and particularly the assembling of ourselves
together, for the public worship of God, have been
ridiculed as mere human institutions, contrived to
keep the vulgar in order. And are not our Churches
deserted by persons whose example draws multi-
tudes of others, and the only remedy that can effectually

take away them from the house of God? and who, upon that account, owe a better example of devotion to their families, to their dependents and imitators, and to their country? And is not the Sabbath of the Lord now become, beyond the probability of former ages, a tedious day of penitence? Is it not made a day of grieving, of ruin, and of despondency?

A PERPETUAL state of reward to the virtuous, and of punishment to the vicious, their being, without scruple or disguise, called in question; and the Christian dispensation, which impresses this alarming apprehension upon the mind, with an evidence too plain to be misunderstood, and too strong to be contested; hath been attacked with a ramscot, that breaks through all the restraints of common decency, and is most offensive to the established religion of our country. And what hath been the result of stripping Virtue of the comfortable sanctions of Religion, and freeing Vice from the terrors of futurity? We see men go on from one wickedness to another, with less fear and less remorse. We hear every day more and more shocking violations of every private obligation, and of every social duty and relation; so that it is a shame even to speak of those things, that are most duly practised, but avowed. Your own reflection upon what passes among us, will supply most particulars that I do not choose to mention; and I have said enough of it to bear more directly upon the part, where the failure lies.

enough to prove, that religion is the source of that
 foundation, which hath put the very foundation
 of government out of course. Indeed, it hath made
 to deep a wound upon our Constitution, and creat-
 ed in it such a radical weakness, as hath, in a great
 measure, rendered the ordinary resources of political
 wisdom and experience, useless and ineffectual. For
 new oaths to secure life and property will avail nothing,
 without some new principle to awaken and secure the
 conscience of those to whom they are administered. To
 directing fierce punishments to atrocious crimes
 will do little more than incite evil-doers to commit
 them with more barbarity, in order to escape the only
 punishment they dread. If we rely merely upon the
 sword, we may perish by the sword. Armies may be
 sufficient to defend us against our enemies, but can
 they protect us against ourselves? Can they inspire
 us with a hatred of vice and immorality? They
 are an intestine plague, that lurks in the bowels,
 and preys upon the vitals of a state. For curing
 this, all external remedies are manifestly improper
 and inadequate. They may torture and exasperate
 the patient, but they can neither reach the seat of
 the disease, nor remove the cause that brought it on,
 and feed it. Indeed, they are like the effort of a
 builder to mend an original defect of a rotten founda-
 tion, by propping an enormous sinking fabric
 with buttresses, which serve only to make the whole
 weight of it bear more directly upon the part, where
 the failure lies.

involved in the progress of this benevolent
 But this is one remedy which is not only good
 it is a remedy in our own power to put in our
 several stations labour to revive the influence of true
 religion; and the efficacy of religious truths; and as by
 this means, national harmony and peace will gradually
 be restored, all ranks and orders of men will expe-
 rience and rejoice in this moral restoration of public
 happiness and security. The dew of heaven dis-
 tilling upon the tender herb, which the burning heat
 of the sun hath withered, doth not, with a more
 kindly virtue, *renew the face of the earth*; than the
 benign energy of the wisdom which is from above,
 shed abroad in the hearts of a people obdurate through
 vice, and fruitful only in works of darkness, ineffably
 diffuses through a Community, the *fruits of a chris-
 tian spirit*; which is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle,
 and easy to be entreated; full of mercy, and good works.*

But how, in this troubled dissolute state of things,
 may good men hope to be the blessed instruments of
 effecting this necessary, this momentous purpose?
 Not by the unintelligible jargon, or devotional rap-
 tures of *Enthusiasm*; which, under the colour of
 a more spiritual piety, is, for the most part, *earthly,
 sensual, and turbulent*: not by a narrow intolerant
 heat of *Bigotry*; which, by contending with a fierce
 zeal for its own speculative modes of faith, and *questions
 generating strife*, hath always been injurious to *Chris-
 tianity*.

Christianity, and obstructed the progress of this benevolent doctrine of salvation; but by their unaffected piety, which demonstrates your love of God, and your love to man, by the duties we bear and shew to our fellow-creatures. This is that piety which the gospel recommends, and the reason of our minds cannot but approve. For, from such a piety, and this, a zeal for the honour of God, a resolute boldness in speaking and acting, as the oracles of God require us to speak and act, in defence of the gospel, are derived; and inward vital goodness, steadily flows. And by this piety, the exercise of every social virtue, that renders christianity lovely and acceptable in the sight of men, is inculcated. Whilst we thus think of, and practise, whatsoever things are pure, true, just, lovely and of good report, we shall leave no room for the bitterest enemies of the christian faith to reproach us; and, with the blessing of God, we shall turn many to righteousness. For, so blameless a conduct, will both express and produce a more thorough conviction, than a thousand arguments, which are not accompanied by this recommendation.

We do not want, even in this degenerate age, powerful encouragements to animate our endeavours in a cause, upon the success of which, the prosperity of the public so nearly depends; and by labouring in which, we shall promote our own temporal and eternal happiness. For we have a numerous Royal Progeny virtuously and religiously educated,

and, under the paternal eye and care of their heavenly Father, will have all the assistance of his Spirit, to their high end, by an irrepressible impulsion, and exemplary discharge of their duty, towards God and towards man, amidst all the fashionable follies and vices that surround them. There is moreover a consideration, that will leave us without excuse, if we *frown or faint, as men without hope*, and whose hearts *fall through fear of these things, that soon to be coming upon them*. For, at the time appointed by God, the gospel will certainly *have its perfect work*: and Isaiah hath expressly described to us, in the beautiful affecting language of prophecy, what state of things will then be introduced into the world, by this heavenly dispensation of *grace and truth*. *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come nigh thee.*

Isaiah liv.
13, 14.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 22, Line 12, for *with* read *without*.
Ibidem, Line 13, for *without* read *with*.

